



Madame Suvorina as she appeared in one of her stage triumphs.

By Mme. Anastasia Suvorina,  
(The Bernhardt of Russia)  
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#### Chapter IV

I HAVE dealt somewhat fully with Rasputin—perhaps too fully; but to me he was such a symbol of the old regime, to me so much the flower of its decay, that it seemed important for me to do so.

I pass now out of the memories of that old Russia, which can never live again, into the new, which, please God, may not live long.

Conceive me as Comrade Suvorina—Citoyenne Suvorina, as I would have been called a little more than a hundred years ago back in the revolution of the French. For weeks I have been out of my theater; rescued in a way which I shall tell later, but not too fully—since Lenin and Trotzky still rule in Petrograd and those who aided me in my escape are still there and subject to the tyranny of those two.

Comrade Suvorina am I—and living like all my kind in Petrograd and in Moscow and in a hundred other cities in terror of the Cheka.

Living in terror not only like my own kind, but like thousands whose titles have been above mine and more thousands who have been below me.

The Cheka!

What was it?

An organization of assassins!

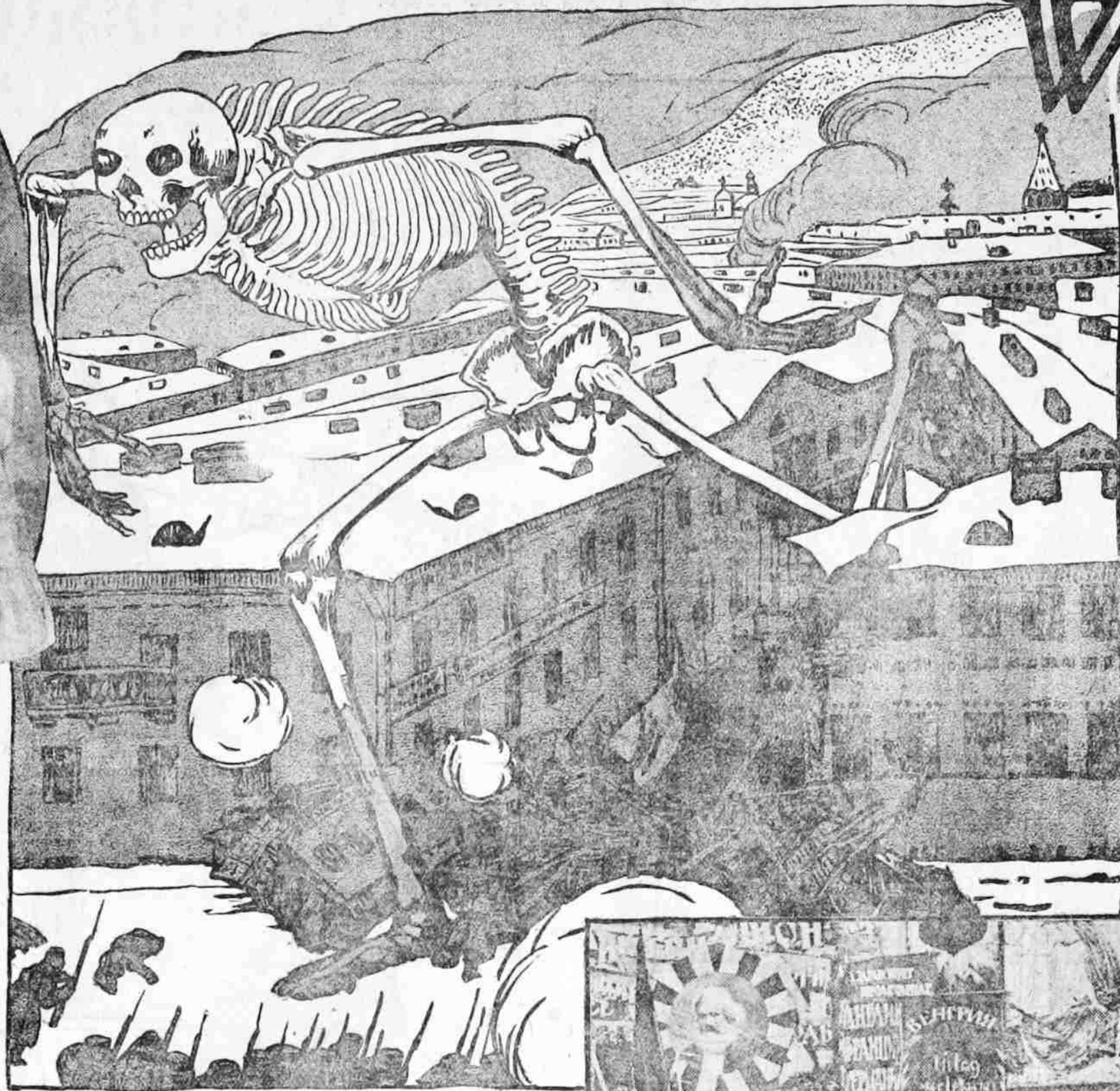
An organized band of murderers to whom murder was not only an art and a diversion, but a passion. Men and women who tortured and killed, because through torture and killing they attained heights of rapture, of ecstasy, not otherwise to be gained by them. Depraved creatures, to whom agony and death were like the sighs and soft laughter of love. Necrophiles! Were-wolves of humanity, whose cages Lenin, the mad dreamer, and Trotzky, the remorseless little Jew tailor of the Bronx, New York, had opened.

Your own Emma Goldman, who after trying to make your own country Bolshevik was deported to her beloved Russia—and has ever since been frantically trying to get back—said this recently of the Cheka in her most interesting story of disillusionment, printed in "The New York World":

"The Cheka unquestionably is the blackest measure of the Bolshevik regime. It would require the master pen of a Dante to bring home to the world the inferno created by this organization, the brutalizing, disintegrating effect it has had upon the extraordinary commissions themselves, the dread, distrust, hatred, suffering and death it has wrought upon Russia. Its proceedings are secret. The so-called hearings, when they take place at all, are a travesty on justice. The 'culprit' is confronted by ready-made evidence, he has no witnesses and is permitted no defense.

"When he is led away from the Chamber of Horrors he does not even know whether he is acquitted or condemned. He is kept in maddening suspense until some night he is called out—never to return. The following morning a Chekist calls for his belongings, and the rest of the prisoners know that another cold-blooded murder has been added to the countless numbers.

"And the relatives and friends of the unfortunates? They go on standing in line on the Lyubianka, the street where the ghastly Cheka is quartered, for days and weeks anxiously waiting for word from their own. At last they are told that the one they are looking



A cartoon published during the early days of the Bolshevik regime and showing the Cheka as a red-handed skeleton running amuck through a city and leaving a trail of death and disaster.

for has been shot the previous night. In most cases the victim has been dead for a long time. Thus insult is added to the tragedy and grief of the mourner.

"The Cheka is the supreme power from which there is no redress, and only rarely an escape. It operates nearly always at night. The sudden flood of light in a district, the noise of madly speeding Cheka automobiles are signals for the alarm and dread of the community. The Cheka is at work again!

"The Cheka was organized to cope with counter-revolution, but for every real conspiracy it has unearthed it has created nine, either of an imaginary nature or of its own making. It must be borne in mind that the main asset of the Cheka are its provocators and informers. Like the scourge of typhus they infest the very air of Russia.

"They shrink from no method, be it ever so base and cruel, to involve their victims and to penalize them as dangerous counter-revolutionists and speculators. In reality, however, the Cheka itself is a hotbed of counter-revolutionary plot and fabulous speculation.

"Every Communist, by the discipline of his party, must at any time be ready to serve in the Cheka. But the majority of the Chekists are from the Czar's 'Ochrana,' from the black hundreds and from the former high officials of the army. They are adepts in the application of barbarous methods."

Lenine and Trotzky, frightened at the Frankenstein's monster they had created, are reported to be limiting its power. In a remarkable dispatch sent out a few days ago from Moscow an Associated Press correspondent said:

"Curtailed of the powers of the dreaded Cheka, the secret police, has loosened Russia's tongue and is restoring a measure of its old life. No longer greatly fearing the ire of the inquisition, most of Moscow's residents, although still somewhat chary of talking politics in public places, have little hesitation now in expressing what they think of things in general.

"They smile more often, give more 'parties' and are beginning again to extend old-time Russian hospitality to strangers without fear that the presence of an unknown guest in their quarters will bring an armed Cheka agent there to investigate.

"Pallid young men of the old class of aristocrats, who survived the World War and perhaps two or three campaigns of the civil war and who spent time in prisons, are returning to their old habits of enjoyment. Some of them look like ghosts returned to a land that is a graveyard of their former wealth, but if they are ghosts they are merry and dance on their own tombstones.

"The princess who once ordered from



Premier Nikolai Lenine, who opened through the Cheka, Mme. Suvorina says, the cages of the were-wolves of humanity.

Paris half a dozen gowns at a time herself mends that one of 1914 vintage which she managed to save. But she wears it gayly and, since the Cheka menace seems one only to remember and even joke about, she dances in it all night.

"The 'ghosts' are happy to escape the grave. The nightmare years seem behind them. They are reveling in freedom. A bottle of vodka may represent the price they got for the last trinket their aristocratic old grandmother managed to save.

"But the Cheka is not at the door to-night. To-morrow may go hang."

The Cheka, as I knew it, had no limitations to its power. In one of its weekly publications it admitted the necessity for brutal torture in an article headed "Enough Sentimentality!" which said:

"In dealing with enemies of Soviet Russia it is necessary to use methods of torture to press confessions out of them and then dispatch them to the other world."

Let me tell you of the Cheka, as I saw and knew it.

The first move of the Bolsheviks, after gaining control of the government machinery, was the re-establishment of the old political secret service, which in the days of the Czars was called the Ochrana—that is, "protection."

The Bolsheviks called it Chresvychaika, out of which came the abbreviation Cheka, meaning "extraordinary." And extraordinary it certainly was!



Guards of the Cheka, Russia's terrorist band, saluting the Third International. The arrow indicates Nikolai Lenine.

Many of the old agents of the Ochrana were employed by the Cheka. The hated Ochrana was located in a gloomy house on Gorchovaya Street, and the same building was used by the Bolsheviks for the Cheka. All the old functionaries, with the exception of a few heads of department who were murdered; all the offices, systems and means of the autocratic institution were taken over completely by the Reds.

However, there was this difference: The Ochrana was an institution designed to protect the safety of a dynasty. The Cheka's purpose was to exterminate the enemies of Lenin, Trotzky & Co. The Ochrana was at least responsible to the Minister of the Interior and was afraid of publicity. The Cheka was the supreme terrorizing institute of "the people." Over it only Trotzky and Lenin and their court ruled, like Oriental potentates over their executioners.

Until only yesterday—if reports of its suppression be true—the Cheka had absolute power to arrest, torture, convict and execute anybody it wanted, without trial or responsibility. No records of any proceedings were kept and no statements were ever made by the Cheka. It was—or is—the most barbaric, lawless, depraved invention of a hundred centuries. It had—or has—the "high, low and middle" justice. The cruelest treatments of the worst of the Czars were liberal "joy rides," to quote your own tongue, as against the Cheka.

I do not exaggerate. The Inquisition, the Assassins of the Three in the days of the Doges, the Assassins of the Old Man of the Mountain in the times of the Crusades—they were babes compared to the Cheka. Hundreds of the nobility, thousands of the intelligentsia—poets, artists, creators of what not—men and women of all classes by more thousands, have gone to their deaths through it.

The heads of the Ochrana were usually men of education and refinement, who though severe in pursuing their policies were at least gentlemen individually and treated their prisoners with cour-

tesy. Many of the heads of the Cheka were uneducated, common working men, who had distinguished themselves in the past either as treacherous provocators or demagogues. But the majority were pathological specimens, studies for Sigmund Freud or Havelock Ellis, to whom mercy and pity were nothing against the roaring gratification of their diabolical passions.

Comrade Derujensky, the chief of the Cheka, by birth a Pole and by profession the editor of a Red weekly, was a maniac of immense erudition and intellectuality, perverted, of course. Leonide Memshtchikoff, head of the Ochrana, had employed him in the past as an agent provocateur. Comrade Derujensky lived for these purposes: To terrorize the Russian middle class, to incite hatred among the moujiks, to create suspicion everywhere by spying, threats, and so on, and to find rest and sleep by witnessing murders or performing them!

His first step upon becoming the head of the Cheka was to employ Chinese kulis, or coolies, and Tartar troops as torturers and executioners. He did this, he said, "because they knew so much about ingenious ways of bringing on slow death, which amused him, and because, not knowing the language, they could not be influenced by the pleadings of those who were thrown into their hands."

The first assistant of Derujensky was "Comrade" Peters, a Jew from London and also a pathological specimen. Like Trotzky, he had been a tailor.

It was Peters who evolved a method of torture never, so far as any records I have perused show, thought of. Peters carried his vocation into his avocation. It was he who invented stitching eyelids and lips and other portions of the body together. And it was he who conceived the brilliant idea of cutting a living victim's skin into coat and vest and trousers, etc., reversing the usual process of tailoring, as it were. Peters is dead. He was executed by relatives of some of those made to undergo unthinkable agonies.

Many of the Cheka were killed from time to time. Naturally. They were

executed both by those whose loved ones they had murdered, or by others who felt that the hand of the assassin was about to reach out for them and decided to kill first. Many of the Cheka fell into the hands of their own dreadful comrades and for one reason or another were put to the same torments and death that they had decreed for others.

There are two kinds of monsters in Russia to-day: the cynical ones and the sentimental ones. Of the two, the latter are the worst. Derujensky, chief commander of all Russian Chekists, has shown himself the most dreadful and merciless of men—yet he is intensely sentimental!

"In our work of Cheka," he wrote in an order which I myself saw and read with utter amazement, "one must have a crystal heart. One must have a highly organized nervous system and one must be interested in and be able to appreciate the highest in music, poetry and indeed in all the arts. For unless a man executing another man or inflicting upon him different kinds of tortures feels himself all these tortures, he cannot do his work in the way I want it done."

"Only when a man feels suffering himself can he make another truly suffer!"

"I want men—and women—of imagination, sensitive, poetic, to serve me. That is why I order my agents to be present at the concerts and theaters, to read books of poetry and make the acquaintance of poets."

True to his faith, Derujensky organized in the Cheka concerts, symphonies and otherwise; ordered the best singers to sing for his agents; ordered Russian poets to be present and read their poetry to these executioners. While the murderers upstairs were listening to all these elevating works, hundreds of martyrs were in the cellars awaiting execution or torment, which they knew would come immediately after the concerts or readings had ended.

Insane! You exclaim, perhaps. I grant you that it was insane. Nevertheless it was horribly true.

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